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FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4892
INFO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 1034
RUEHSL/AMEMBASSY BRATISLAVA 0048
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 9806
RUEHCP/AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN 0263
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 4263
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 1725
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 3453
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 0450
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 6903
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 4519
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL CALCUTTA 0843
RUEHCN/AMCONSUL CHENGDU 0846
RUDKIA/AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI 0544
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 2789
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0431
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L RANGOON 001075

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STATE FOR EAP/MLS; PACOM FOR FPA

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [EAID](#) [KWMN](#) [BM](#)

SUBJECT: BURMA'S WOMEN'S AFFAIRS FEDERATION TOUTS ITSELF

REF: RANGOON 1012

Classified By: Poloff Dean Tidwell for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Although the Myanmar Women's Affairs Federation (MWAFF), an organization closely linked to the GOB, claims to prevent human trafficking and assist victims, its primary focus seems more geared to propaganda. Its small operating budget limits its effectiveness. The organization has unsuccessfully sought partnerships with UN organizations and INGOs to bolster its legitimacy. MWAFF's representatives often attend ceremonies and photo ops welcoming trafficking victims home but then disappear, leaving INGOs to carry out the difficult tasks of repatriation and rehabilitation. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) In order to gain more information on the GOB-linked MWAFF, Poloff and visiting DRL officer met with representatives of the organization on July 21. MWAFF, which claims to be an independent NGO, has as its key patrons the wives of the regime leaders, Than Shwe and Maung Aye. Underscoring its ties with the GOB, the MWAFF told us that a meeting would have to be requested by dip note through the Foreign Ministry.

¶3. (U) MWAFF claims to have 2.6 million members nationwide and offices in all townships. It claims to prevent human trafficking by training women in literacy projects, extending low-interest micro-credit loans to women in need, and by assisting with repatriation and reintegration of trafficked victims. However, its 2006 budget for micro-credit loans was only USD 6,150, which went to 160 women in the entire country (less than USD 40 each). They also claimed their legal staff played a significant role in drafting Burma's current TIP law.

¶4. (C) Representatives of Save the Children told us that MWAFF frequently attends ceremonies to welcome trafficked victims

back home, poses for photos with the returnees, and then disappears to let INGOs finish the difficult work of repatriation and rehabilitation (reftel). Most INGOs and UN agencies try to keep their distance from MAAF because foreign donors will not fund projects affiliated with MAAF. UNICEF's child protection officer told us they collaborate with the Myanmar Nurses Association but not with the MAAF, due to its close affiliation with the regime.

¶5. (U) The July 23 edition of the regime's daily newspaper "The New Light of Myanmar" tried to capitalize on the Embassy meeting by running an article and photo extolling the supposed anti-trafficking activities of the MAAF. The article also took issue with U.S. sanctions, which the MAAF claims make Burmese women more vulnerable to trafficking.

¶6. (C) COMMENT: MAAF is a propaganda arm of the regime. It has demonstrated no genuine interest in helping trafficking victims. Rather, it tries to legitimize its role by taking advantage of those INGOs and UN agencies providing real assistance. END COMMENT.
VILLAROSA